

# Solidarity Statement From Cairo

Comrades from Cairo

To all those in the United States currently occupying parks, squares and other spaces, your comrades in Cairo are watching you in solidarity. Having received so much advice from you about transitioning to democracy, we thought it's our turn to pass on some advice.

Indeed, we are now in many ways involved in the same struggle. What most pundits call "The Arab Spring" has its roots in the demonstrations, riots, strikes and occupations taking place all around the world, its foundations lie in years-long struggles by people and popular movements. The moment that we find ourselves in is nothing new, as we in Egypt and others have been fighting against systems of repression, disenfranchisement and the unchecked ravages of global capitalism (yes, we said it, capitalism): a System that has made a world that is dangerous and cruel to its inhabitants. As the interests of government increasingly cater to the interests and comforts of private, transnational capital, our cities and homes have become progressively more abstract and violent places, subject to the casual ravages of the next economic development or urban renewal scheme.

An entire generation across the globe has grown up realizing, rationally and emotionally, that we have no future in the current order of things. Living under structural adjustment policies and the supposed expertise of international organizations like the World Bank and IMF, we watched as our resources, industries and public services were sold off and dismantled as the "free market" pushed an addiction to foreign goods, to foreign food even. The profits and benefits of those freed markets went elsewhere, while Egypt and other countries in the South found their immiseration reinforced by a massive increase in police repression and torture.

The current crisis in America and Western Europe has begun to bring this reality home to you as well: that as things stand we will all work ourselves raw, our backs broken by personal debt and public austerity. Not content with carving out the remnants of the public sphere and the welfare state, capitalism and the austerity-state now even attack the private realm and people's right to decent dwelling as thousands of foreclosed-upon homeowners find themselves both homeless and indebted to the banks who have forced them on to the streets.

So we stand with you not just in your attempts to bring down the old but to experiment with the new. We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatized and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios, and police 'protection'. Hold on to these spaces, nurture them, and let the boundaries of your occupations grow. After all, who built these parks, these plazas, these buildings? Whose labor made them real and livable? Why should it seem so natural that they should be withheld from us, policed and disciplined? Reclaiming these

spaces and managing them justly and collectively is proof enough of our legitimacy.

In our own occupations of Tahrir, we encountered people entering the Square every day in tears because it was the first time they had walked through those streets and spaces without being harassed by police; it is not just the ideas that are important, these spaces are fundamental to the possibility of a new world. These are public spaces. Spaces for gathering, leisure, meeting, and interacting - these spaces should be the reason we live in cities. Where the state and the interests of owners have made them inaccessible, exclusive or dangerous, it is up to us to make sure that they are safe, inclusive and just. We have and must continue to open them to anyone that wants to build a better world, particularly for the marginalized, excluded and for those groups who have suffered the worst.

What you do in these spaces is neither as grandiose and abstract nor as quotidian as "real democracy"; the nascent forms of praxis and social engagement being made in the occupations avoid the empty ideals and stale parliamentarianism that the term democracy has come to represent. And so the occupations must continue, because there is no one left to ask for reform. They must continue because we are creating what we can no longer wait for.

But the ideologies of property and propriety will manifest themselves again. Whether through the overt opposition of property owners or municipalities to your encampments or the more subtle attempts to control space through traffic regulations, anti-camping laws or health and safety rules. There is a direct conflict between what we seek to make of our cities and our spaces and what the law and the systems of policing standing behind it would have us do.

We faced such direct and indirect violence, and continue to face it. Those who said that the Egyptian revolution was peaceful did not see the horrors that police visited upon us, nor did they see the resistance and even force that revolutionaries used against the police to defend their tentative occupations and spaces: by the government's own admission; 99 police stations were put to the torch, thousands of police cars were destroyed, and all of the ruling party's offices around Egypt were burned down. Barricades were erected, officers were beaten back and pelted with rocks even as they fired tear gas and live ammunition on us. But at the end of the day on the 28th of January they retreated, and we had won our cities.

It is not our desire to participate in violence, but it is even less our desire to lose. If we do not resist, actively, when they come to take what we have won back, then we will surely lose. Do not confuse the tactics that we used when we shouted "peaceful" with fetishizing nonviolence; if the state had given up immediately we would have been overjoyed, but as they sought to abuse us, beat us, kill us, we knew that there was no other option than to fight back. Had we laid down and allowed ourselves to be arrested, tortured, and martyred to "make a point", we would be no less bloodied, beaten and dead. Be prepared to defend these things you have occupied, that you are

building, because, after everything else has been taken from us, these reclaimed spaces are so very precious.

By way of concluding then, our only real advice to you is to continue, keep going and do not stop. Occupy more, find each other, build larger and larger networks and keep discovering new ways to experiment with social life, consensus, and democracy. Discover new ways to use these spaces, discover new ways to hold on to them and never give them up again. Resist fiercely when you are under attack, but otherwise take pleasure in what you are doing, let it be easy, fun even. We are all watching one another now, and from Cairo we want to say that we are in solidarity with you, and we love you all for what you are doing.

Comrades from Cairo.  
24th of October, 2011.